

**PRESS RELEASE**

**Date: 24/4/24**

**REACH achieves over £500,000 gains for local people**

*REACH Community Projects has announced that it has achieved record financial gains for its clients over the past six months but its CEO, Henry Wilson, describes this double edged sword in the light of recent worrying media reports.*

Henry Wilson, CEO of Haverhill based REACH Community Projects, spoke out on Monday in celebration that the REACH team had broken all previous records in real achievements for people in hardship. The record breaking figure is the overall financial gain for clients in a six month period (from October 2023 to March 2024) which amounted to over £500,000.

This amazing amount is made up of emergency aid, utility support, benefits entitlements (including Child Benefit), debt relief and money from the Household Support Fund, which is currently set to end in September.

REACH supports those in financial crisis, in the Haverhill and surrounding areas, who come to them for help, and the highly trained team get to work on a journey with the client, which often starts with emergency aid from various funds to deal with the immediate situation, and goes on to work through a programme of debt relief and to claim benefit entitlements which, often through the complexities of the system, have eluded those in need.

Henry Wilson later spoke of his deep concern at recent media reports suggesting that the bar is going to be significantly raised for genuine benefit claimants and that the successful Work and Health Programme will end in the autumn. Henry said “While some of our clients are not in work, many are. But even they still find making ends meet, in this world of rising prices and high rents, very difficult indeed. REACH is there to lend a helping hand to get through individual and family financial crises, but our job will be made harder if statutory institutional support is reduced or removed.”

The £500,000 gain (which is an annualised amount) does not mean pots of money in the bank but has real life practical significance for those who are hard pressed. Essential things such as the ability to pay rent and utilities, to have a warm home, to afford food and clothing and, for many, the cost of travel to and from work.

Henry Wilson, CEO of Reach Community Projects, said:

“I cannot describe how extremely pleased I am with our dedicated team of staff and volunteers for having achieved this simply incredible result and my thanks goes out to them as well as to our superb donors and benefactors who make this possible. It’s more Pounds in Pockets and means people don’t have to rely on the food bank”

“Of course, the joy at being able to deliver this record amount is tempered somewhat by the fact that it is necessary in the first place and that the need is growing. This half-million pound figure is almost one hundred thousand up on our last set of data for a similar period and it saddens me greatly that this is a rising barometer of the amount of distress and destitution within what should be a modern caring society.”

Real life example

“Behind this record amount of success are so many true and moving stories and its difficult to recite them all but one I recall is of an elderly gentleman who came to us requesting some help to apply for single person discount on his council tax.

He was a roofer but had to stop working when he needed a hip replacement and was now struggling on his minimal pension. When we met with him in his tiny supported-living flat, we quickly found out that he was in danger of losing his home because he just couldn’t keep up with his rent.

After a few questions, we pointed out a different reduction to apply for, and from that he was granted a full exemption instead, saving him £175 per month, and ensuring that his rent is covered. He is incredibly relieved that his home is now safe. “

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**Note to editors**

Photo caption

· Staff, including CEO Henry Wilson, from REACH Community Projects celebrating the record amount

